

# **MPO Meeting Minutes**

## **Memorandum for the Record**

### **Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting**

#### **February 4, 2021 Meeting**

10:00 AM–12:28 PM, Zoom

David Mohler, Chair, representing Jamey Tesler, Acting Secretary, and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

#### **Decisions**

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) agreed to the following:

- Approve the minutes of the meeting of January 7, 2021
- Approve the Calendar Year (CY) 2021 Roadway Safety Targets for the Boston Region

#### **Meeting Agenda**

##### **1. Introductions**

See attendance beginning page 18.

##### **2. Chair's Report—*David Mohler, MassDOT***

There was none.

##### **3. Executive Director's Report—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)***

T. Teich noted that the hiring process for the Data Strategist position would be paused to focus on hiring a Director of Projects and Partnerships to replace outgoing Director of Technical Services, Scott Peterson. Applications for the new position would close February 26, 2021.

T. Teich provided updates on recent MPO staff outreach and coordination efforts. MPO staff held a planning meeting with 15 stakeholders for the new Equity Task Force on February 2, 2021. MPO staff hosted the Southern Urbanized Area (UZA) MPO Coordination Meeting on February 3, 2021. The Southern UZA meeting brings together staff from the Boston Region MPO, Old Colony Planning Council, and the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District to discuss coordination efforts with the southern portion of the UZA.

MPO staff also recently presented at Metropolitan Area Planning Council's (MAPC) MetroWest Regional Collaborative subregional meeting.

T. Teich noted two active surveys, one for the public to gather Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) study ideas and another for municipal representatives regarding the MPO election process.

T. Teich stated that MPO staff would host the first of two forums on Travel Demand Management in a post-COVID World on Thursday, February 18, 2021.

T. Teich mentioned several tentative items on the agenda for the MPO meeting on February 18, 2021, including work scope approvals and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project scoring.

#### **4. Public Comments**

Eric Johnson (City Engineer, City of Framingham) provided updates on cost increases for two currently programmed TIP projects in Framingham—project #608228 (Reconstruction of Union Avenue) and project #608889 (Traffic Signal Installation at Edgell Road and Central Street). E. Johnson acknowledged that project #608228 experienced a slight cost increase between the 75 percent and 100 percent design submittals, from \$9.2 million to \$9.7 million. E. Johnson stated that this was because of inflation in MassDOT estimates for items such as crushed stone and pavement. E. Johnson stated that the increased cost remains below the initial 25 percent design estimate of \$10.6 million because the City of Framingham funded concrete base removal with local funds during a utility project. Regarding project #608889, E. Johnson stated that the cost estimate increased from \$1.72 to \$1.98 million largely due to an increased scope for full-depth reclamation. E. Johnson stated that the City of Framingham is not sure where MassDOT's current estimate for the project, \$2.5 million, originated, and wish to further engage with MassDOT on that estimate.

Jessica Whited (Resident, Town of Belmont) expressed opposition to proposed TIP project #609204 (Community Path, Belmont Component of the Mass Central Rail Trail [Phase 1]). This project has not been programmed for funding. J. Whited stated that she is a direct abutter to the proposed project location and has serious and unaddressed concerns about the project. J. Whited's concerns included proposed 24-hour lighting, the preservation of existing trees, water runoff and flood risk, and privacy. J. Whited stated that project planners from the Town of Belmont did not follow up on resident requests to meet regarding the project.

Mark Ryan (Director of Public Works, Town of Norwood) advocated for two currently programmed projects in FFY 2022—project #605857 (Intersection Improvements at

Route 1 and University Avenue/Everett Street) and project #606130 (Intersection Improvements at Route 1A and Upland Road/Washington Street and Prospect Street/Fulton Street). M. Ryan stated that the Town of Norwood and MassDOT recently held a comment resolution meeting for project #605857 and design plans are being updated in advance of site meetings and a design public hearing. M. Ryan stated that this project would address an important intersection that the Town of Norwood has been working to improve since 1998, when CTPS published a study. M. Ryan stated that the Town of Norwood has produced three traffic studies since then and worked with local developers to leverage design funding. M. Ryan stated that project #606130 would address a serious safety issue and 75 percent design plans have been submitted to MassDOT. M. Ryan stated that this project was originally programmed in FFY 2021 and was moved in FFY 2022. M. Ryan advocated for both projects to remain programmed in FFY 2022. M. Ryan stated that the Section 61 finding noted in the accompanying documents for today's meeting pertains to a separate but coordinated signal project at the location of Moderna Therapeutics.

Alex Train (Director of Housing and Community Development, City of Chelsea) advocated for project #608078 (Reconstruction of Broadway, from City Hall to the Revere City Line). This project is currently programmed in FFY 2022. A. Train thanked the MPO for investing in equity and environmental justice communities, stating that project #608078 is the first MPO investment in Chelsea in more than five years. A. Train stated that the project will advance and accelerate economic, social, and environmental benefits for a community that is the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in Massachusetts. A. Train stated that the financial outlook in the City of Chelsea has darkened due to the pandemic and federal and state sources of funding are critical to existing development and community enhancement efforts. A. Train stated that this project is a full-depth reconstruction of a critical principal arterial. A. Train stated that the project will consist of sidewalk and roadway reconstruction, signal modernization, the replacement of obsolete drainage, bus stop upgrades, and installation of bike lanes and street trees. A. Train stated that the City of Chelsea has reached the 75 percent design stage and has encountered cost increases of approximately \$3.4 million due to the inflation of MassDOT unit prices. A. Train stated that since the new cost estimates were presented, the City of Chelsea has been working to proactively value engineer the project to shrink the cost increase to approximately \$2.1 million. A. Train stated that the City of Chelsea hoped that the MPO would continue to support the project despite the cost increase and is proceeding with the targeted advertisement date of December 2021. A. Train stated that the City of Chelsea is undertaking a \$7 million water and sewer enhancement project with local funding, which, combined with project #608078,

will be transformative for the corridor and the community. A. Train stated that the community benefits of the project outweigh the cost increases.

Kristen Guichard (Planning Director, Town of Acton) advocated for project #608229 (Intersection Improvements at Massachusetts Avenue [Route 111] and Main Street [Route 27] [Kelly's Corner]), which is currently programmed in FFY 2022. K. Guichard thanked the MPO and MassDOT for their support of the project and stated that the Acton community is excited for the project to become reality. K. Guichard stated that the project location is in Acton's primary commercial center near the Acton-Boxborough school campus. K. Guichard stated that the Acton Town Meeting approved the necessary right-of-way appropriations in the spring of 2020. K. Guichard stated that 100 percent design plans were submitted to MassDOT in January 2021 and the project has received Massachusetts Environmental Protection Agency approval. K. Guichard stated that the Town of Acton is now undertaking the right-of-way process and is aware of some anticipated cost increases.

Rich Benevento (World Tech Engineering) provided updates on six currently programmed TIP projects and two proposed TIP projects in different municipalities. Regarding project #607652 (Reconstruction of Ferry Street in Lynn), R. Benevento stated that the project is listed as over budget and the final plan, specification, and estimate package has been submitted in advance of scheduled advertisement in March 2021. R. Benevento stated that the consultant's estimate for the portion of the project cost that can be covered using federal funding is \$24.25 million, with an additional \$6.4 million in nonfederally funded costs for utilities and lighting, bringing the total cost estimate to \$30.65 million. R. Benevento stated that this project is ready to be advertised for construction pending an Everett City Council meeting in February to approve the 307 right-of-way acquisitions.

Regarding project #608933 (Rehabilitation of Central Street in Peabody), currently programmed in FFY 2023, R. Benevento stated that a design public hearing is scheduled for May 6, 2021, with a projected advertisement date of December 17, 2022. R. Benevento stated that MassDOT provided comments related to right-of-way acquisitions and revised right-of-way plans were recently submitted. R. Benevento stated that the office estimate for that project is \$10.22 million, with \$1.9 million in nonparticipating costs for water utilities bringing the total project cost to approximately \$12 million.

Regarding project #608348 (Rehabilitation of Bridge Street in Beverly), 75 percent design plans are due to MassDOT in May 2021. R. Benevento stated that the current

project cost estimate is \$6.1 million and it is scheduled to be advertised for construction on December 3, 2022, with no current issues and support from the City of Beverly.

Regarding project #609252 (Rehabilitation of Essex Street in Lynn), programmed in FFY 2024, R. Benevento stated that the project is in the 25 percent design phase with a scheduled advertisement date of February 24, 2024. The current cost estimate is \$16.9 million, which may change as the design is refined.

Regarding project #609257 (Rehabilitation of Beacham Street, from Route 99 to Chelsea City Line in Everett), R. Benevento stated that this is a project important to both the cities of Everett and Chelsea. The project is in the 25 percent design phase, currently programmed in FFY 2025 with a cost estimate of \$7 million

Regarding project #610662 (Roadway and Intersection Improvements at Woburn Common, Route 38 [Main Street], Winn Street, Pleasant Street, and Montvale Avenue in Woburn), R. Benevento stated that this project is currently programmed in FFY 2025 with a cost estimate of \$14.3 million.

Regarding project #607777 (Rehabilitation of Mount Auburn Street [Route 16] in Watertown), currently programmed in FFYs 2022–23, R. Benevento stated that there has been ongoing coordination with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) regarding catenary wire. The project team anticipates comments from the MBTA soon, with an anticipated 25 percent design hearing in the next few months. The current project estimate is \$27.25 million and the scheduled advertisement date is February 24, 2023.

R. Benevento advocated for two projects that are proposed for programming in FFY 2026, #610932 (Rehabilitation of Washington Street in Brookline) and #609246 (Reconstruction of Western Avenue [Route 107] in Lynn). Topographic surveys are underway for both projects, as well as traffic studies and community outreach for project #609246.

Aleida Leza (Resident, Town of Belmont) expressed opposition to proposed project #609204 (Community Path, Belmont Component of the Mass Central Rail Trail [Phase 1]). A. Leza is an abutter to the proposed project and a neighbor of J. Whited. A. Leza stated that the project does not have community support from the approximately 70 surrounding homeowners, and that Town of Belmont staff have not been responsive to emails and calls from homeowners. A. Leza stated that project staff hold project meetings on short notice and prevent homeowners from asking questions while allowing questions from project supporters. A. Leza stated that MassDOT Senior Environmental Planner Michael Trepanier attended a recent meeting and can attest to her experience.

A. Leza stated that the engineering plans that were presented to homeowners were too small to read and were not adequately explained. A. Leza expressed concerns about proposed lighting and drainage plans for the project, which she stated would drain ice, salt, and rain to abutting properties and damage trees in a climate crisis. A. Leza stated that project staff have not responded to concerns about drainage.

Jeanette Rebecchi (Transportation Program Manager, Town of Bedford) advocated for project #607738 (Minuteman Bikeway Extension), which is currently programmed in FFY 2023 and has experienced a cost increase of \$4.2 million. J. Rebecchi stated that the Town of Bedford has been working for 15 years to design this regionally significant project, which extends the Minuteman Bikeway from Bedford Center to the Concord town line. J. Rebecchi stated that 75 percent design plans were submitted in the fall of 2020, and a large portion of the cost increase is due to further design of a culvert under Route 62, a high speed and high volume roadway, and the replacement of a water main along the off-road portion of the path. This portion of the path needed to be lowered so that the side slopes would not impact surrounding wetlands. J. Rebecchi stated that the Town of Bedford does not expect the price to continue to increase and is actively working to secure the right-of-way. J. Rebecchi stated that the project is currently on schedule and could be accelerated to meet an earlier advertisement date.

Robert Penfield (VHB) spoke on behalf of the City of Woburn regarding project #604996 (Bridge Replacement, New Boston Street over MBTA in Woburn). This project is currently programmed in FFY 2021. R. Penfield stated that the project is an important regional transportation connection. R. Penfield stated that the project is on a revised schedule with an anticipated project advertisement date of May 2021. R. Penfield stated that the project has experienced a cost increase of \$3 million between the 75 and 100 percent design submittals. R. Penfield stated that the cost increase is due to the need to move all of the proposed utilities underground and changes to assumptions regarding soil management at the request of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). R. Penfield stated that the project team does not anticipate any additional cost increases.

## **5. Committee Chairs' Reports—*Ben Muller, MassDOT, UPWP Committee Chair***

B. Muller stated that the UPWP Committee met prior to the MPO board meeting to begin development of the FFY 2022 UPWP. B. Muller encouraged members and the public to participate in the UPWP study ideas survey.

**6. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*Lenard Diggins, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council***

L. Diggins stated that Marty Milkovits, MPO staff, would speak about travel demand modeling at the next Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Advisory Council) meeting. L. Diggins also stated that Ryan Hicks, MPO staff, planned to speak at the next MBTA Rider Oversight Committee (ROC) meeting (L. Diggins represents the ROC on the Advisory Board) regarding his research on Park and Ride lots at MBTA facilities.

**7. Action Item: Approval of January 7, 2021, MPO Meeting Minutes—*Barbara Rutman, MPO Staff***

1. [Draft MPO Meeting Minutes: January 7, 2021](#)

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 7, 2021, was made by the North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) (Tina Cassidy) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (Brian Kane). The Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton) (Austin Cyganiewicz) and the South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway) (Peter Pelletier) abstained. At-Large Town (Town of Arlington) (Daniel Amstutz) noted a correction to the Members Items section. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) (Ken Miller) was misquoted regarding the amount of federal appropriations for transportation. Jonathan Church, MPO staff, stated that this would be corrected before a final version was posted. The motion carried.

**8. Action Item: CY 2021 Roadway Safety Targets for the Boston Region—*Michelle Scott, MPO Staff***

1. [Memorandum: CY 2021 Roadway Safety Targets for the Boston Region](#)

M. Scott said that states and MPOs are required to set annual targets for federally required safety performance measures. She noted that the MPO voted on transit asset management performance targets at the meeting on January 21, 2021, and would vote on additional transit safety targets in March 2021.

M. Scott stated that the federal performance management areas include Safety, Asset Condition, System Performance, and Congestion Management and Air Quality. Roadway Safety performance targets are included under Safety. M. Scott noted that additional information on federal performance measures and targets could be found in Chapter 4 (Performance Analysis) of the MPO's current TIP and on the MassDOT Tracker website at [massdottracker.com](https://massdottracker.com).

M. Scott stated that these roadway safety performance measures are outcome-based measures that set targets for fatalities and injuries from motor vehicle collisions. The

measures apply to all public roads, use five-year rolling annual averages, and reflect one CY. M. Scott noted that the MPO has voted to support the Commonwealth’s targets for all measures for the past three years. M. Scott added that FHWA assesses progress as data become available and evaluates performance at the state level only. FHWA looks at whether states are making significant progress, which means they are achieving targets or performing better than baselines for at least four out of five measures. If significant progress is not achieved, states must document actions that they will take to achieve their targets. FHWA reviews how MPOs are addressing Performance-Based Planning and Programming requirements as part of their quadrennial certification review.

M. Scott stated that the Commonwealth considers historic data, current trends, and planned policies and strategies when developing its targets. FHWA encourages states to set targets that are data driven, realistic, and attainable. The Commonwealth’s long-term targets are to achieve zero fatalities and serious injuries in all areas. The proposed CY 2021 targets for these federally required roadway safety measures, along with the Commonwealth’s long-term targets, are shown below.

<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>CY 2021 Target (2017–20 Average)</b>	<b>MA Long-Term Target</b>
Number of Fatalities	339.00	0.00
Fatality Rate (per 100M VMT)	0.55	0.00
Number of Serious Injuries	2,580.00	0.00
Serious Injury Rate (per 100M VMT)	4.23	0.00
Serious Injuries	506.00	0.00

CY = calendar year. M = million. MA = Massachusetts. VMT = vehicle miles traveled.

M. Scott discussed a series of charts displaying Commonwealth trends, projections, and targets for each measure, along with trend data for the Boston region. She noted that the fatality rate has been lower in the Boston Region compared to the Commonwealth overall and these rates have generally declined over time for both areas. The serious injury rate is still lower in the Boston Region compared to the Commonwealth overall, but there’s less of a difference in serious injury rates for the two geographic areas. These serious injury rate values have also generally declined over time. M. Scott stated the Boston region makes up a larger share of nonmotorized fatalities and nonmotorized serious injuries in Massachusetts than of overall fatalities or of overall serious injuries. This safety performance area in particular should be addressed through coordinated planning, investment, and strategy implementation between MassDOT, the MPO, the region’s municipalities, and other stakeholders. M. Scott mentioned several areas where



there are opportunities to improve roadway safety: policy and legislation, data and analysis, engineering and infrastructure, education and awareness, and emergency response. The data and analysis and engineering and infrastructure areas are the most pertinent to the work of the MPO. M. Scott noted the connection to the MPO's recent discussion of Vision Zero policies and the importance of both roadway design and of coordination between different levels of government to improving safety outcomes.

M. Scott stated that the target-setting process could provide important context for TIP discussions. M. Scott recommended that the MPO approve the Commonwealth's proposed targets for CY 2021 to satisfy federal requirements and reflect the collaborative relationships necessary to improve roadway safety in the region.

### ***Discussion***

K. Miller noted that the state has chosen to set a fatality rate target that assumes a downward trend for fatality rates. He cautioned that the number of fatalities has stayed about the same while traffic volumes have decreased during the pandemic, which means that rates can go up. K. Miller stated that the state legislature may be considering a primary seat belt law again and added that Massachusetts has one of the lowest seat belt usage rates in the country. K. Miller stated that there is a direct correlation between primary seat belt laws and seat belt usage. K. Miller encouraged everyone to encourage their state legislators to support a primary seat belt law.

L. Diggins stated that he was also curious about the downward trend for fatality rates given what he had heard about increases in speeding and unsafe behavior and declining traffic volumes during the pandemic. L. Diggins also asked whether MassDOT could present to the MPO regarding the Strategic Highway Safety Plan. D. Mohler stated that a presentation could be scheduled for the MPO or Advisory Council, or the topic could be addressed in another way. D. Mohler added that it is true that fatality rates may increase because people may be driving less safely during the pandemic, but said that the Commonwealth was not willing to set a target that assumed an increase in the fatality rate.

### ***Vote***

A motion to approve the CY 2021 Roadway Safety Targets for the Boston Region was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (B. Kane) and seconded by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

## **9. Discussion: Federal Fiscal Years 2022–26 TIP Funding Outlook— *Matt Genova, MPO Staff***

### **1. [TIP Development: Information on Programmed and Unprogrammed Projects](#)**

M. Genova provided an overview of this year's TIP development process and funding outlook. M. Genova stated that MPO staff are wrapping up the process of evaluating new projects for potential programming. Scores for newly evaluated projects are planned to be shared at the February 18, 2021, MPO meeting. M. Genova stated that there were 27 projects across five of the MPO's investment programs scored for potential programming this year. Of the 27, 16 were scored for the first time and 11 were scored in previous years but not funded due to funding limitations. As is the case in every TIP cycle, these projects will primarily be considered for funding in the fifth and final year of the TIP, FFY 2026. Final endorsement of the FFYs 2022–26 TIP is expected at the end of May 2021.

M. Genova stated that one of the tools the MPO uses to consider TIP projects for funding is the relationship between the current distribution of MPO funds across project types and the goals set for this funding distribution in the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Looking at the current distribution of funds in the FFYs 2021–25 TIP, the MPO is slightly over-programmed in Complete Streets and Major Infrastructure (MI), and slightly under-programmed on Intersection Improvements and Transit Modernization. Some of this is due to the recently changed definition of MI, rather than the definition used at the time of project programming.

M. Genova gave a five-year overview of available Regional Target funding. The availability of funds is determined by guidance from FHWA and MassDOT. The MPO staff receives this information every January at the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies annual meeting. M. Genova stated that the funding available in FFY 2025, programmed in last year's TIP, was roughly \$4.3 million below what was anticipated in the LRTP. That discrepancy has increased to nearly \$9 million in FFY 2026, the fifth and final year in this year's TIP. The board will have just over \$105 million to allocate to projects in 2026, lower than anticipated in the LRTP, and lower than any of the prior four years.

In a discussion of factors shaping the amount of funding the MPO will have to fund new projects this year, M. Genova noted that if the board continues past practice, some funding would be retained in support of two of the MPO's investment programs, Community Connections and Transit Modernization. Additional funding would be needed to cover significant cost increases for projects currently programmed in FFYs 2021–25, totaling more than \$69 million in additional project costs over what was

anticipated when the current TIP was first endorsed by the MPO in May 2020. M. Genova stated that because the TIP is a fiscally constrained capital plan, any changes made to cover cost increases for projects in FFY 2021 will filter through the entire plan, and will be compounded by additional cost changes in subsequent fiscal years. The board will need to decide how to approach this challenge to arrive at a new five-year capital program. M. Genova will return with more details on new projects seeking funding this year at the MPO meeting on February 18, 2021.

### ***Discussion***

Eric Bourassa (MAPC) asked what factors are driving cost overruns for currently programmed projects.

D. Mohler stated that the TIP is \$11 million over budget in FFY 2021 and the MPO will need to figure out whether to delay projects or remove projects. D. Mohler asked John Bechard (MassDOT Highway Division) to provide specifics about two projects with large cost increases: Ferry Street in Everett and New Boston Street in Woburn.

J. Bechard stated that the Highway Division is aware of the cost increases and working actively with proponents and designers to address them. J. Bechard stated that Ferry Street is essentially 100 percent complete. J. Bechard stated that there is approximately \$6 million in federally nonparticipating work for street lighting and landscape design details, which may be one of the items contributing to the significant cost increase. J. Bechard stated that the MPO initially programmed Ferry Street at \$25 million in the FFYs 2021–25 TIP because those were the funds available at the time and the design had just been submitted so an exact cost estimate was not yet available. J. Bechard noted that the City of Everett and WorldTech have completed a large and complicated project in a short amount of time when the ability to deliver the project in the proposed timeframe was a concern for MassDOT. Regarding the New Boston Street project, J. Bechard stated that there were some changes required because of coordination with the MBTA, EPA, some private interests, and some right-of-way impacts. J. Bechard stated that there are also projects in Littleton/Ayer, Framingham, and Reading in FFY 2021 that have experienced cost increases, and the Highway Division is working to resolve these. J. Bechard stated that there is some inflation from when projects were originally programmed, but that MassDOT has been receiving favorable bids recently and it sometimes takes time for MassDOT's cost estimator application to be updated with the most recent information. J. Bechard stated that he and his team would look at the more up-to-date information to see if they could bring closure to some of the fiscal constraint issues.

E. Bourassa stated that, to the extent the MPO can understand what has been driving cost increases for the last three or four TIP cycles, the board should have a conversation about how to learn from them. E. Bourassa stated that it may make sense to leave some funding unprogrammed to address the trend of increasing costs every year.

B. Kane stated that during the development of the FFYs 2021–25 TIP, the City of Everett agreed to move Ferry Street to FFY 2021 to help solve other fiscal constraint issues. B. Kane stated that this deserves consideration when discussing cost increases.

B. Kane asked about the status of Rutherford Avenue in Boston. D. Mohler stated that Rutherford Avenue has been a commitment in the MPO's LRTP for a while. D. Mohler stated that last year, the MPO programmed the project over four years with the knowledge that there would be a fifth year of construction. When it was programmed, the cost estimate was approximately \$146 million and the MPO programmed approximately \$120 to \$121 million in the first four years, leaving \$25 million for the fifth year (FFY 2026). In addition to the programmed amount, the Rutherford Ave project has a current cost estimate of \$175 to \$177 million, so there are approximately \$33 million in cost overruns for Rutherford Avenue. For the MPO to keep its funding commitment to Rutherford Avenue, the MPO needs to fund both the \$26 million in originally anticipated costs and \$33 million cost increase over the life of the project.

Tom Kadzis (City of Boston) (Boston Transportation Department) stated that it is incorrect to characterize cost increases as overruns. He stated that it is standard procedure for cost estimates to be conservative in the early stages of design and begin to increase once projects reach 25 percent design. He pointed out that Rutherford Avenue is similar to other projects discussed at this meeting in terms of the known cost estimate relative to the design maturity of the project. He said that the MPO has continuously witnessed proportionally larger cost increases at the 25 percent design phase versus the 75 percent design phase or beyond and has made attempts to address cost increases. For example, the MPO heard a presentation from Beth Osborne of Transportation for America on cost-effectiveness measures. He stated that the size of the Rutherford Avenue project magnifies the perceived impact of the cost increases. T. Kadzis also noted that B. Kane expressed support for Ferry Street, which has experienced a 70 percent cost increase. He indicated that the City of Boston would continue to support all of the currently programmed projects that have experienced cost increases, as they have always done, provided the MPO can devise a strategy and schedule for doing so. T. Kadzis noted that there have been other large projects that have experienced significant increases in the past, and the MPO continued to support them. T. Kadzis acknowledged that the finances of the MPO are finite and noted that

there is talk in Congress of reinstating earmarks. Regarding Rutherford Avenue, He stated that \$141 million was programmed in the TIP and the LRTP, and stated that the project is on the same playing field as all of the other programmed projects in terms of how it is performing relative to cost increases. He reiterated that in his opinion these are not cost overruns, but more accurate costs as projects advance in design.

Jay Monty (At-Large City) (City of Everett) stated that there is clearly something systemic that results in perennial cost increases. Regarding Ferry Street, J. Monty agreed that the cost increase is not an overrun given that there has been no scope change between the 75 and 100 percent design phases, adding that the City of Everett has absorbed \$6 million in nonparticipating costs in that time. J. Monty stated that project staff estimate construction unit prices using the information available at the time, which is provided by staff at MassDOT and other agencies. Each time the design is updated, there are new unit prices. J. Monty stated that there is clearly something not being accounted for when there are similar percentage cost increases across projects. J. Monty stated that he does not suggest reducing the MPO's commitment to any projects, but needs to do a better job at creating estimates. One option may be to ask some projects to move back a year.

R. Benevento stated that cost estimates begin at the Project Review Committee (PRC) stage and are generally the best guess estimate without full topographic survey information. As projects advance, a better idea of costs emerges. Regarding Ferry Street, R. Benevento stated that a concrete base was discovered under Ferry Street as the project moved along, adding to the cost. R. Benevento added that as projects age, inflation becomes a factor. Regarding scope creep, R. Benevento stated that while the Ferry Street project team did not plan to expand the scope of the project, issues with National Grid and the MBTA were raised towards the end of the design process. Regarding Central Street in Peabody, R. Benevento questioned the cost estimate included on the handout for the meeting, stating that WorldTech's estimate is \$10.2 million for federal participating costs and not the \$15.2 million shown on the handout. R. Benevento stated that he would work with MPO staff to resolve the discrepancy and continue working closely with MassDOT to avoid scope creep.

Steve Olanoff (TRIC Alternate) asked for clarification regarding the inclusion of nonparticipating costs. D. Mohler stated that nonparticipating costs should not be reflected in the TIP cost estimates. D. Mohler asked J. Bechard to clarify the cost estimate for Ferry Street without the nonparticipating costs. J. Bechard stated that the cost estimate for federal participating costs (i.e., the MPO's funding share) is \$28 million.

K. Miller stated that the MPO must be careful about the total federal participating cost estimate versus the office estimate. The total federal participating cost estimates include items not included in the office estimates.

J. Monty asked for clarification on whether the additional costs added on to the office estimate and included in the total federal participating cost (police details, administration, etc.) are known before the final design is ready and can be factored into the anticipated cost earlier.

D. Mohler stated that there is an estimate that assumes what those costs are at the 25 percent design stage, primarily based on a function of a percentage of the cost of the project. D. Mohler stated that whether the problem is correctly characterized as a cost increase, scope creep, or a cost overrun, there is something systemically wrong with the process. D. Mohler stated that consultants, MassDOT, and the MPO as a community of practitioners can either improve budgeting and maintain cost discipline over time, or there needs to be a change to the four-percent inflation assumption. D. Mohler noted that many public commenters attributed cost increases to inflation despite the fact that a four percent inflation adjustment is already included in the TIP. D. Mohler stated that maybe the MPO should assume a 10 percent cost increase per year instead. Regardless, D. Mohler stated that the MPO has a serious systemic problem when there is \$3 million available and 27 eligible projects totaling \$300 million.

J. Bechard stated this is something that the Highway Division is looking at addressing. To answer J. Monty's question, the add-ons to the project are assessed when the project first comes in for approval through the PRC. There is a cost that is associated with it, and the Highway Division factors that cost with items that are required to deliver the project that make the total federal participating cost. It is generally 20 to 25 percent with some of it being the inflation factor. MassDOT is working on improved mechanisms to track and keep costs in line with what was originally submitted for approval at the PRC stage. When MassDOT factors in those add-ons and gets to the end of the line with final design, it is not looking at TIP adjustments all the time to be able to advertise the projects because of cost. This is a systemic problem as was stated earlier.

L. Diggins stated that Transportation for America came to speak to the MPO last January to discuss cost effectiveness. He said that once the MPO agrees to fund a project, the MPO feels it has an obligation to fulfill if we have made a promise to a project. He said while he understands this, at some point, the MPO may need to say that they are not doing anything for a year because the MPO does not have the money to fund projects and cannot make the commitment. If the MPO receives money the next year, then perhaps the board could elect to only spend half of it until the next year,

knowing there will be project overruns until the process for estimating project costs changes.

R. Benevento noted that, from the design side, if a consultant sees the programmed amount for a project in the TIP is \$25 million, then the designer is designing to \$25 million, but only to find out there are add-ons afterward. He noted there is an ongoing effort to assemble a stakeholder partnering group from EDC-2 Innovations, the FHWA's Center for Accelerating Innovation, to discuss some of these things to get a better handle on cost estimating. R. Benevento stated it would be helpful if MassDOT's contract advertising and planning estimator is distributed to the consultant community as well. He stated this would give a project consultant a better cost estimate including MassDOT's required add-ons.

K. Miller talked about the possibility of designing to a number, but in a different context. In the Pioneer Valley MPO, he mentioned a prior project that continued to go over budget and the MPO finally determined that it could no longer continue funding it. This MPO could decide to tell project proponents to design their projects to a specific cost, giving a certain amount of money to a project and holding to that amount. This would mitigate scope creep. He stated that all participants in the TIP process should know how a total federal participating cost is estimated.

D. Mohler noted that this MPO always says that it has a need to keep its commitment to projects that have already been selected for funding in the TIP. He said the MPO can set its own policy on this, but this policy does not impose any kind of cost budget discipline on anyone. He noted that MPO members may consider a project to be worth funding at a cost of \$10 million, but may not feel the same way if its cost were \$15 million.

Samantha Silverberg (MBTA) said the MBTA has implemented a new process over the last year or so to better manage project cost changes. She said she would strongly recommend that the MPO consider reevaluating a project if it has a significant cost increase, either by absolute value or proportion of baseline cost. She said this process could include doing a full rescoring of a project using the MPO's TIP criteria, or could at least instruct project proponents bringing cost increases to the MPO for consideration on a project-by-project basis. S. Silverberg noted there is a fundamental moral hazard if the MPO funds all cost increases without there being any restrictions. She also noted that the world has changed since the COVID-19 pandemic began and the decisions that the MPO board made three, four, or five years ago may no longer be no-brainer decisions today. S. Silverberg stated it makes sense for the MPO to have thresholds at which projects are reconsidered before the MPO continues to fund them.

B. Kane asked what number the MPO needs to target to maintain fiscal constraint given existing funding commitments. D. Mohler said there are two different ways to consider this question. First, he noted the MPO does not have enough funding available to meet its commitments to projects in the current fiscal year of the TIP, meaning the MPO must find a way to address this shortfall so that projects can be advertised for construction bids on time. M. Genova added that the size of this shortfall is around \$11 million.

D. Mohler stated that the MPO will have to cut \$11 million worth of projects or figure out a way to fund some of these projects over two years and cut \$11 million in other projects in the next year. D. Mohler stated the MPO can cut projects by deciding not to fund one, funding it next year, or moving cash flow into next year, noting that many changes will have a ripple effect throughout the TIP.

D. Mohler noted that the second way to consider this question is that the MPO can keep existing commitments to all the projects in the TIP, including their cost increases, and elect to not take any projects out of the TIP, but that means the MPO will only have \$3 million to spend on new projects in FFY 2026.

B. Kane asked when the MPO's deadline is to make these decisions. D. Mohler replied that TIP development needs to be done by the end of March because the TIP feeds into MassDOT's Capital Investment Plan (CIP). He noted that the next step will be for the MPO to discuss TIP project readiness at its next meeting.

## **10. Presentation: MetroCommon Update—Sarah Philbrick, MAPC**

### **1. [Presentation: MetroCommon](#)**

S. Philbrick gave an update on MetroCommon, MAPC's next long-range plan for the region. As part of the plan, MAPC conducts a scenario planning analysis, conducts research about the region, and provides tools to help implement the plan. S. Philbrick stated that the guiding principle of scenario planning is that the future is based both on what is inside and outside of the region's control at the regional level. S. Philbrick stated that current policies may not work under future conditions. Three key uncertainties examined in the plan are regional demographics and the economy, the future of travel, and federal policies. These key uncertainties were developed by external advisory groups and MAPC staff, and were chosen because of the high likelihood of having a large impact on the region. Staff also changed their approach after COVID-19 to avoid discussing "dystopian" futures. S. Philbrick stated that during the public engagement process for each key uncertainty, participants were placed into breakout groups with several possible futures and strategies and asked how they felt different futures may



make policies more or less effective. Staff took this feedback to help suggest strategies that might be most important under various possible futures.

S. Philbrick noted that the development of population scenarios is extremely relevant to the MPO's LRTP process. MAPC developed six population scenarios for the region based on different assumptions about migration and birth and death rates. In addition to demographics, MetroCommon also uses new land use modeling techniques. The model allocates household size and employment across the region using location choice models specific to household segments or industries. These allocations are based on various data including historic patterns of development, Massbuilds development information, CTPS travel model skims, and zoning capacity. S. Philbrick stated that MAPC is planning policy engagement, focus groups with experts and hard to reach populations, and the release of a number of research products over the next few months. The entire plan will be launched softly in July 2021 with MAPC Council adoption expected at the end of the summer.

*Note: At this time, E. Bourassa assumed the Chair's seat.*

## **11.Members Items**

There were none.

## **12.Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by the North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) (T. Cassidy) and seconded by the Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce) (Tom O'Rourke). The motion carried.

## Attendance

<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Daniel Amstutz
At-Large Town (Town of Brookline)	Heather Hamilton
City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency)	Todd Kirrane
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Jim Fitzgerald
Federal Highway Administration	Tom Kadzis
Federal Transit Administration	Ken Miller
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	David Mohler
MassDOT Highway Division	John Bechard
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	John Romano
Massachusetts Port Authority	Samantha
MBTA Advisory Board	Silverberg
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Jillian Linnell
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Brian Kane
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	Eric Bourassa
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Thatcher Kezer III
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	Austin Cyganiewicz
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Darlene Wynne
South Shore Coalition (Town of Rockland)	Tina Cassidy
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Lenard Diggins
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Jennifer Constable
	Peter Pelletier
	Tom O'Rourke
	Steve Olanoff

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<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Rich Benevento	World Tech Engineering
Rachel Benson	
Todd Blake	City of Medford
Sarah Bradbury	MassDOT Highway Division
Brendan Callahan	City of Peabody
Ben Cares	City of Chelsea
Paul Cobuzzi	
Paula Doucette	
Johannes Epke	Conservation Law Foundation
Matt Grew	DOT
Joy Glynn	MWRTA
Kristen Guichard	Town of Acton, Planning Director
Andrew Hall	
Eric Johnson	City Engineer Framingham
Alexandra Kleyman	City of Somerville
Kristiana Lachuisa	LivableStreets
Aleida Leza	Belmont Resident
Owen MacDonald	Town of Weymouth
Ben Muller	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Erika Oliver Jerram	MetroWest Framingham
Will Paulitz	
Robert Penfield	VHB Consultant
Stefanie Beavers	VHB Consultant
Sarah Philbrick	MAPC
Bryan Pounds	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Constance Raphael	MassDOT Highway Division
Jeanette Rebecchi	Town of Bedford, DPW
Jon Rockwell	
Mark Ryan	Norwood
Greg St. Louis	Watertown, Superintendent of Public Works
C. Senior	MassDOT
Michael Trepanier	MassDOT
Jon Seward	
Darin Takemoto	
Alex Train	Housing and Community Development, City of Chelsea
Frank Tramontozzi	City of Quincy
Josh Trearchis	
Laura Weiner	City of Watertown

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<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Jessica Whited	Belmont Resident
Rebecca Curran	
Joe Blankenship	City of Boston
David Manugian	Town of Bedford
Matthew Petersen	
Andrew Yarrow	Conservation Law Foundation
Charles Quigley	Town of Marblehead
Schuyler Larrabee	
Wes Edwards	MBTA
Jay Corey	City of Woburn

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Tegin Teich, Executive Director  
Annette Demchur  
Matt Archer  
Jonathan Church  
Róisín Foley  
Hiral Gandhi  
Matt Genova  
Betsy Harvey  
Sandy Johnston  
Anne McGahan  
Martin Milkovits  
Kate Parker-O'Toole  
Ariel Patterson  
Gina Perille  
Scott Peterson  
Barbara Rutman  
Michelle Scott  
Kate White

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